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Canadian Holmes

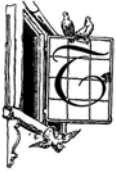
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Fall 2016

One-hundred and forty-ninth issue

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GRACES OF BOOTPRINTS

Mycroft in the spotlight

Here at the *Canadian Holmes* editorial offices, we look over a wide Sherlockian world, one that includes pastiches and crafts, tattoos and cartoons, reviews and recipes. Mycroft Holmes in spandex on a treadmill, however, pushes the envelope to places we hadn't imagined. Mycroft has "a suggestion of uncouth physical inertia," to quote Dr. Watson from "The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans." He is not svelte and prone to workout. That is, until BBC's *Sherlock* crew got hold of the elder Holmes brother. Mark Gatiss plays the role and interprets the character differently than Conan Doyle first imagined. Gatiss played it a bit closer to the literary character in *The Abominable Bride*, if not a bit too far off the other end of the size and gluttony spectrum.

Mycroft casts a large shadow over the Canon not only for being Sherlock's smarter brother, but also for the mysteriousness of his position within the government, and the odd relationship he has with our favourite consulting detective. Although only mentioned in a handful of stories, Mycroft often appears in adaptations of the Canon. BBC had him feature in the first episode of their series, thus setting him up to be a major player in their updated view of the Holmes brothers.

In this issue, Brenda Rossini puts the original Mycroft on trial for his actions, or inactions, in "The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter." Rossini lays out the argument and you have to come to your own decision. This article features custom art work by Laurie Fraser-Manifold.

There is also a song about *A Study in Scarlet* by Karen Gold, Nick Dunn-Meynell takes a pointed look at harpoons and "The Adventure of Black Peter," and Brian Gibson looks at the ploys of Sherlock Holmes. The usual suspects of Mrs. Hudson's Kitchen, book reviews, a Letter from Lomax and Diary Notes are also all shoehorned in these 40 pages.

From Mrs. Hudson's Kitchen

This column is by Mrs. Hudson herself and dictated to Wendy Heyman-Marsaw, a Sherlockian and Master Bootmaker living in Halifax. Mrs. Hudson provided this photograph of herself at age 24, taken on the occasion of her betrothal to Mr. Hudson.



The Turkish Bath

Holmes and I had a weakness for the Turkish bath. It was over a smoke in the pleasant lassitude of the drying room that I have found him less reticent and more human than anywhere else. On the upper floor of the Northumberland Avenue establishment there is an isolated corner where two couches lie side by side, and it was on these that we lay upon September 3, 1902, the day when my narrative begins.

— The Adventure of the Illustrious Client

Turkish Baths were popular from the moment they were introduced to the British Isles. Leslie Klinger writes in *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes* that they were "...introduced to London Society by David Urquhart, a diplomat who served at the British Embassy in Turkey from 1831-1837." In the ensuing years of the 19th century, over 600 establishments opened in Britain, with 100 located in London. Some were attached to existing municipal bathing facilities, so the middle classes were not excluded from the benefits of the Turkish bath. This was an important factor since many homes at the time did not have bathing facilities.

The baths were regarded as "health spas" and were believed to have a positive effect on total physical well-being. As Dr. Watson noted in "The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax:" "But why Turkish?" asked Mr. Sherlock Holmes.... "Because for the last few days I have been feeling rheumatic and old. A Turkish bath is what we call an alterative in medicine – a fresh starting-point, a cleanser of the system."

The Turkish bath commences with relaxation in a room (known as the warm room) that is heated by a continuous flow of hot, dry air, allowing the bather to perspire freely. Bathers may then move to an even hotter room (known as the hot room) before they wash in cold water. After performing a full body wash and receiving a massage, bathers finally retire to the cooling-room or drying room for a period of relaxation. Some of the facilities were quite luxurious and boasted Royal Doulton basins, exotic tile work and even minarets on their architecture.

The Turkish bath favoured by Holmes and Watson was “the Northumberland Avenue establishment known as the Charing Cross Baths or Nevills,” according to Jack Tracy in his *Encyclopedia Sherlockiana*. There had been Turkish baths here since 1871 but the present building was opened by the Nevills in 1895. It is still possible to get some idea of the opulence of one of Nevill’s nine London Turkish baths by visiting the restaurant which now occupies their former New Broad Street site.

Ladies enjoyed equally luxurious but separate facilities from the gentlemen, often at the same locations. I must say that the accommodations for ladies, albeit smaller than those for men, were lush and lovely.

Recipes:

Easy Turkish Delight: Yield 1 and 3/4 pounds.

Recipes for these delectable confections were brought back from Turkey by the crusaders. The 19th-century introduction of corn syrup and man-made gelatin made it possible for these candies to be made cheaply. Early references to them in English were called “lumps of delight.” Nineteenth century English jelly candies (of all sorts) were called Turkish Delights, beginning in 1877.

Ingredients : 3 envelopes unflavored gelatin, 2 cups sugar, 1/8 teaspoon salt, 1 cup water (add some rose water to taste to make up cup), 1 tablespoon lemon or 1 tablespoon orange juice, 1 teaspoon lemon or 1 teaspoon orange rind – grated, red food coloring, powdered sugar.

Mode: Mix gelatin, sugar and salt in a heavy pot. Add water. Bring to slow boil and simmer without stirring for 10 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in juice and rind. Add a few drops of food colouring to turn the mixture a light pink. Taste for flavour; you may desire to add a bit more juice. Pour into 8-inch square pan which has been rinsed in cold water but not dried. Chill overnight. Cut into squares and roll each in powdered sugar.

The Trial of Mycroft Holmes

By Brenda Rossini

Brenda Rossini is a 35-year member of several Chicago-area Sherlockian societies. She is the author of the book Sherlockian Ruminations of a Stormy Petrel, a welter of Sherlockian toasts, the regularly emailed "Sherlockian Asides" newsletter, and the Criterion Bar Association newsletters.



mycroft Holmes's background

Mycroft Holmes is Sherlock's senior by seven years. He is reportedly fat and exceptionally brilliant. He seldom moves from his accustomed cycle: his rooms, his office in a government building and the Diogenes Club, where silence is obligatory. Mycroft is at the Club regularly from 4:45 p.m. to 7:40 p.m., sufficient time for a prodigious High Tea.

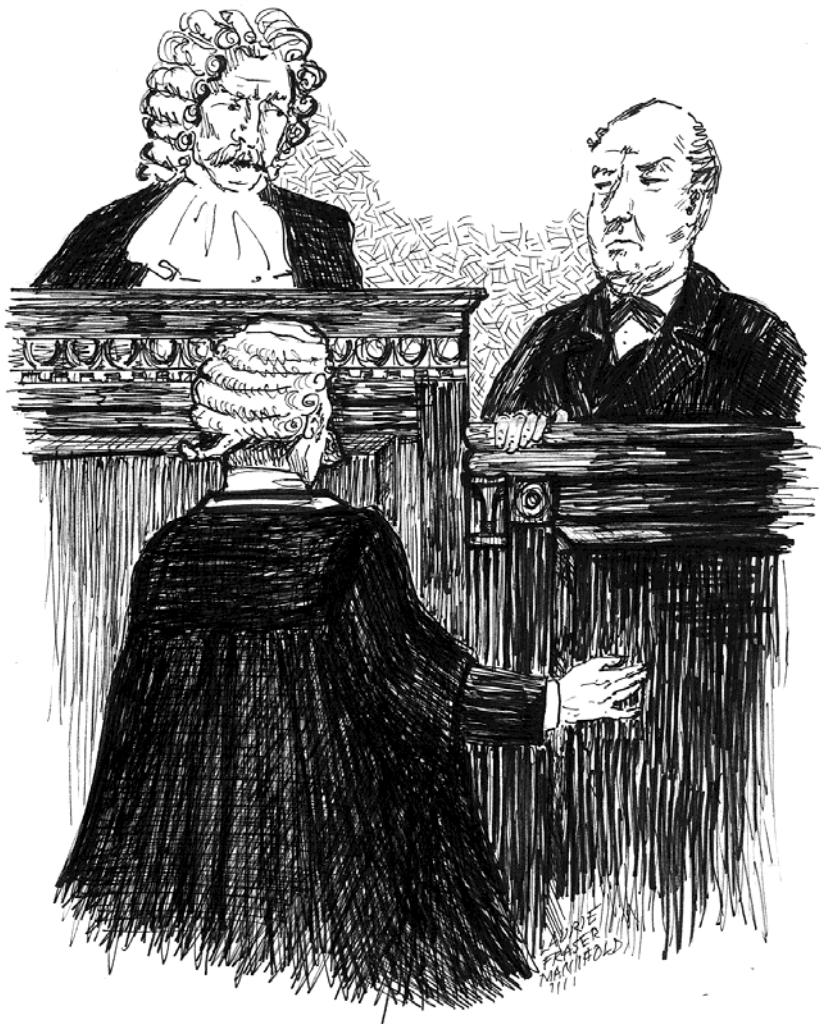
He is lethargic. It's brother Sherlock who combines both brilliance and energy. Mycroft works for Her Majesty's government. In "The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter," Holmes informs us, vaguely, that Mycroft "audits the books in some of the government departments."

In "The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans," Watson learns that Mycroft has a position of importance and prestige: "occasionally he is the British government . . . the most indispensable man in the country:

"We will suppose that a minister needs information as to a point which involves the Navy, India, Canada and the bimetallic question; he could get his separate advices from various departments upon each, but only Mycroft can focus them all, and say offhand how each factor would affect the other."

Keep in mind Mycroft's expertise. In the "Greek Interpreter," we react with measured awe as the brothers, Sherlock and Mycroft, engage in the art of deduction as they develop the status of a man they observe walking outside their window.

Did Mycroft participate in any crimes in "The Greek Interpreter"?
Can he be held accountable for his conduct?



The story in a nutshell:

Mycroft lives in the same building as Mr. Melas, a well-known Greek interpreter for foreign guests in London hotels. On a Monday evening, Melas is lured to an unknown destination by Harold Latimer, one of the kidnapers. There he is ordered to translate for an emaciated prisoner, whose face is covered with sticking-plaster (bandages) to make it difficult to recognize him. Their prisoner is Greek and doesn't speak English. Melas shows strength under pressure. Cleverly, he adds a question in Greek to the prisoner and is able to learn a few things. He is

interrupted in the furtive translation by a tall, dark woman who enters and recognizes the prisoner as her brother, Paul Kratides. She is Sophy Kratides, who apparently eloped with Latimer, which wasn't sufficient to turn over the family fortune to the kidnappers. Sophy seemed helpless but Kemp and Latimer would soon learn that a more apt description of Sophy would be "still waters run deep." The kidnappers threaten Melas with retaliation, pay him five sovereigns, take him by coach to an isolated heath outside London and dump him there at midnight. In the dark, he meets up with a railway porter, who tells him he has to walk but a mile to catch the last train for Victoria Station.

The next day, Tuesday, Melas goes to the police, who don't believe him. Though he's an educated Englishman, he has a foreign look to him... "Greek by extraction," said Sherlock Holmes. Melas then goes to Mycroft's rooms and asks him to lend assistance.

Later, Mycroft would tell Dr. Watson that he listened attentively to Melas, from whose account he made "some very pleasing speculations." He made an inquiry to the Greek Legation but they were noncommittal, perhaps otherwise engaged in that Mediterranean country's debt default and restructuring of 1893.

Mycroft then placed this ad in the daily papers:

"Anybody supplying any information to the whereabouts of a Greek gentleman named Paul Kratides, from Athens, who is unable to speak English, will be rewarded. A similar reward paid to anyone giving information about a Greek lady whose first name is Sophy. X 2473."

The kidnappers were thus alerted to Melas's loose lips and would retaliate by re-kidnapping him.

J. Davenport answered the ad and informed Mycroft as to the location of the house where he saw Sophy and where Paul Kratides was being held. The kidnappers escaped and took Sophy with them. They left behind their bound victims. Paul Kratides is dead and Melas is almost dead from suffocation in a shut room with a lit charcoal brazier that was generating noxious fumes.

Several months later *The Times* from Budapest reported that two Englishmen, travelling with a Greek lady, had argued, fought and stabbed one another fatally. Holmes believed Sophy Kratides murdered them and got her revenge.

Likely criminal charges

1. Attempted murder: the bludgeoning and charcoaling of the Greek interpreter, Melas, who survived.
2. The murder of Paul Kratides: The conspirators, Kemp and Latimer, kidnapped Melas in order to communicate with Paul, who then died from starvation and charcoal smoke.
3. The re-kidnapping: Melas was kidnapped twice; the re-kidnapping occurred after the kidnappers learned he had talked because Mycroft placed the ad in the daily papers.
4. Assault and battery: of Melas.

Would the government bear a responsibility for Mycroft's conduct? What was Mycroft's duty, whether in an individual capacity or as agent for her majesty's government?

The Kratides and Melas case was conceivably outside the scope of Mycroft's employment so one cannot presume to draw in the Government as co-defendant (in any case, the Government generally holds immunity from lawsuits such as these). On the other hand, why did the usually indolent Mycroft accompany Sherlock and Dr. Watson to the scene unless he was necessary to the criminal investigation, perhaps for his diplomatic and government connections?

Once he agreed to become involved, what then was required of Mycroft in duty and performance? What had Melas expected of Mycroft?

Melas was possibly anticipating the assistance of Mycroft's brother, the Great Detective. He must have trusted Mycroft. Mycroft made no unlawful misrepresentations about himself or his expertise. He even admitted to Watson that he wasn't particularly competent in this investigation: "*Sherlock has all the energy of the family,*" said Mycroft, *turning to me. "Well, you take the case up by all means, and let me know if you do any good."*

Did it matter whether or not Mycroft was paid by Melas? No. A volunteer can be held responsible just as a good Samaritan on the roadside.

Will the Crown prevail in a prosecution of Mycroft?

It is doubtful that Mycroft could be charged with the intentional murder of Paul Kratides or the attempted murder of Melas. There was no orchestration on his part, no intent and he wasn't present. The defence would more than likely overcome the prosecution's case and show that

the murder and attempted murder were *preconceived* by Kemp and Latimer in their attempt to wrest financial control over the Kratides fortune.

A trickier charge to overcome would be criminal negligence, which is a little criminal, a little civil, and not as difficult a burden for the prosecution. Recall that the plaintiffs in OJ's civil trial, and in Robert Blake's civil trial, won with a lesser burden of proof.

With negligence, it's not "beyond a reasonable doubt." Legal terminology for proof of liability can be a dense thicket. Suffice it to summarize that:

- Causation in negligence can be explained as "but for" Mycroft's advertisement, Paul Kratides would not have died, Melas would not have been re-kidnapped, Melas would not have been injured and Sophy would not have been hauled off to parts unknown by the kidnappers. Did Mycroft's ad lead to the criminal acts?
- The facts must be such that there is an unbroken chain of causation from Mycroft to advertisement to the wrongful acts.
- Should Mycroft, as a reasonable, astute man, have been able to foresee the outcome of his ad?
- Were the ad and its disclosures mean spirited?
- Was Mycroft willful in putting Melas, Paul and Sophy at risk?
- Could an advertisement result in murder? (as has occurred with today's Craigslist? No. These modern ads have directly involved the actual parties and victims, and not third parties.)

Rest easy!

The general rule: publication of an ad is not an extreme and outrageous act. Here, there was no puffery, no hyperbole, no inflated facts, no emotional rendering.

The trial circa 1893

All the jurors would have been men. The pubs outside the Old Bailey would be filled with carousers and court watchers. St. Sepulchre church was nearby, and available for a whispered prayer for or from an accused. Mycroft would have been led into the Old Bailey courthouse through a tunnel underneath from Newgate Prison.

What were the conditions at Newgate? Oscar Wilde was held there for his 1895 trial on sodomy until his bail was posted. There was no ventilation. There were no toilets, and inmates used a tin can in the cell to which they were confined all day. There were no mattresses; Oscar



Wilde slept on a board. They were made to walk six miles in a circle, daily. Utter silence was imposed at all times. They were fed porridge and cocoa. Why the gift of cocoa? Cadbury had made its prosperous industrial chocolate name in England, and, having been established and operated by the heretofore persecuted Quakers, donated regularly to poor houses, prisons, the John Howard Society and orphans' homes.

In the courtroom, spectator seats in an important trial would have included London's Lord Mayor, aldermen, clerks and important members of the clergy, with a few remaining for relatives, interested parties and the public.

The defendant took a seat on the dock, a raised platform, and would stand when requested. Mycroft, standing in the dock with his prison warden, had the right not to testify to prevent self-incrimination. Mycroft would know from the Diogenes Club that “silence is golden.” Oscar Wilde did not avail himself of the privilege in the first of his trials, and was ravaged on cross-examination by Sir Edward Carson.

The judge: The Lord Chief Justice sat on a raised, crimson-cushioned bench. He wore crimson red for ceremonial occasions and a full wig but presiding in a run-of-the-mill criminal case, he would wear a less ostentatious black damask gown daubed with gold lace and his short wig.

The witnesses: Who would testify in the Mycroft Holmes trial?

The landlady of the Mycroft and Melas premises, Melas, Mr. J. Davenport, Sherlock Holmes, Dr. Watson, Inspector Gregson, the police constable with whom Melas spoke, the chemist who sold sticking plaster to the giggling gentleman, staff from the hotel where Melas got the referral, and the railway porter at Wandsworth Common, where Melas was dropped off.

Both prosecution and defence can call these witnesses for their separate purposes.

Will these witnesses be enough for either side to prove their case?

Case/argument for the Crown:

The prosecutor opens the case. Both he and defence counsel wear silk black gowns. Traditionally, the prosecutor cannot appeal to emotion though heady reference to the classics muddied the rule. In Oscar Wilde’s criminal trial, he recounted that the prosecutor’s argument was an “appalling denunciation [of me] – like something out of Tacitus, like a passage in Dante, like one of Savonarola’s indictments of the Popes of Rome.”

The prosecutor lays out facts. He would seek to deflate the honour and integrity of Mycroft Holmes. He would manipulate the strengths of Mycroft’s career, as well as that of his brother, to show that Mycroft possessed great sense, competence and resources. For this reason, the prosecution would urge, Mycroft’s defence of stupidity, or, in the alternative, “no harm done” or “no duty owed,” should be abjured by the jurors and that common sense should prevail.

The Crown would show that as a government agent, long in her Majesty’s service, Mycroft had the training and opportunity to identify

and apprehend criminals. Instead, Mycroft found this case a bit of a lark during the time that two people were being held against their will by two dangerous men.

He saw his brother and Watson over a day and a half after Melas had stopped by his rooms to request his assistance. Mycroft hadn't asked them to come. After placing the ad, he willfully abandoned Melas. He retreated to the Diogenes Club. Sherlock and Dr. Watson happened to come to see him. Why? We can reasonably infer that the police informed them about the case, which they had first heard from Melas.

It was a Wednesday evening by the time of the Holmes brothers and Dr. Watson's meeting. Mycroft mentioned the case to them quite casually. Yet, Melas had had his first encounter with Kemp and Latimer on Monday evening. Mycroft placed the ad by Tuesday. It was simply too explicit that he should have withheld some information in the interest of safety. His brother wouldn't have revealed his hand.

Mycroft Holmes, from all the aforementioned facts, failed to act reasonably under the circumstances. What should he have done? He should have gone to the police and caused a warrant to be issued. He had the authority to demand that the police respond. Mycroft *admitted that he failed to go to the police*. The jury should give ample weight to the admission of the amply endowed Defendant that he was guilty of inaction and incompetence.

Melas was the hero in this case. He was treated shabbily, even criminally, by Mycroft Holmes. Melas's quick mind must be commended. When he was first in that room with Paul Kratides, even after being threatened by Kemp and Latimer, he kept his wits about him and obtained vital information from Paul.

The jurors may choose to find Mycroft liable on the lesser offence. He should not be absolved and let off scot free. His self-professed stupidity in placing the ad was wanton and criminal because he put human beings in harm's way.

An alternative for the prosecution:

Mycroft was stalling after Melas came to see him. But why and for what reason? Perhaps Melas was not such an innocent, and perhaps the police, when they spoke with Melas, recognized this or knew of his unsavory employment. Mycroft and Melas may have been working together. Melas's career was that of interpreter for foreigners staying in London hotels, and, coincidentally, he and an agent of the Crown,

Mycroft Holmes, resided in the same building. They were discussing the Kratides case as allies.

The prosecution cannot be in the business of coincidences, admittedly, yet how else does one explain Kemp and Latimer's connection to Melas and the Northumberland Avenue hotel staff? Neither of them were "wealthy Orientals." Mycroft Holmes must have made them aware of Melas's Greek facility.

Melas and Mycroft were complicit in the placement of the ad (in such an instance, the prosecution would do well to make unavailable the witness Melas, and situate him on the Continent). On the other hand, Mycroft knew to dispose of Melas, a witness to the discreditable kidnapping fiasco. With the placement of the ad, Kemp and Latimer had time to dispose of Paul Kratides and whoever else. The ad was a signal: "The plan is known. Your covers are blown. Charcoal for 2 and flight with number 3." Mycroft's ad was the fatal cause of Paul's death. He knew he had been starved and was in perilously weak condition. As Mycroft stalled and engaged in conversation with his brother and Dr. Watson, Kemp and Latimer's charcoal fire was smoking.

Mycroft Holmes's defence

Defence lawyers were rarely used until the late 19th century. Even then, few defendants were able to afford a lawyer unless the Crown appointed one, as it would in cases of murder.

Mycroft's defence would argue that, he being of aristocratic lineage, the idea that he was allied with criminal sorts was laughable were not the Defendant on trial for his life and his reputation.

Mycroft's career with British intelligence was long and formidable. He kept foreign enemies at bay and the British Isles safe. In the British Secret Service, the M in MI 5 and MI 6 (domestic and foreign intelligence) may in fact be short for Mycroft. He was a mathematical genius with an extraordinary faculty for figures.

His personal characteristics reveal a predictable and enviable circumspection. He had had fixed, regular and dependable habits without a scintilla of deviation, such as this murderous foray for financial gain.

And Melas? The jury must be persuaded that he simply brought the circumstances upon himself, without any assistance from Mycroft Holmes. He got his business contacts, distastefully, from hotel staff. He was a risk taker. He was rather "gleeful," as Dr. Watson described him, and who also said Melas had eyes "sparkling with pleasure." The defence

would submit that Melas's glee arose from his undue attraction to risky behavior.

Melas told Mycroft that he was impressed with Latimer being "fashionably dressed." Melas, a professional, thought it reasonable to leave his house at 7:15 at night, with a perfect stranger, because his clothing was fashionable, to go to an undisclosed location.

He took on unknown clients in unfamiliar locales. All for the sake of a fee. He wasn't regularly employed. How on earth did he afford his membership at the Diogenes Gentlemen's Club or his rooms in the Pall Mall? Melas placed himself in risky circumstances, whatever the consequences, in search of a fee.

The police didn't believe Melas...they obviously didn't find him credible. Why should the jurors find him believable or the prosecutor's version of Melas's nobility?

And the ad: Sherlock Holmes himself said that agony columns "are always instructive" and "Surely the most valuable hunting ground that ever was given..." ("The Adventure of the Red Circle"). Mycroft selflessly offered a reward...to save Paul and Sophy...in an advertisement, a tactic learned from the Great Detective. There was nothing irresponsible or unprofessional about the use of personal advertisements in the course of Mycroft's criminal investigation...*not* criminal conduct. It may arguably have been a blunder, but it wasn't a criminal act. As soon as there was an answer to the ad from J. Davenport, Mycroft was roused to immediate action and a trip to Lower Brixton to interview him.

Looking back at the scene of the crime: In what condition did Melas find Paul Kratides when he first arrived? At death's door and deadly pale. Was this attributable to Mycroft? Certainly not. Those two, Kemp and Latimer, intended Paul Kratides's death at the outset. Whether he signed or not, Paul was not going to leave alive. No advertisement was responsible for Paul's kidnap, assault, battery and death. It began three full weeks prior.

There is worse yet about Melas. Kemp was elderly, giggly and somewhat mad. He appeared to have a nervous malady akin to St. Vitus' Dance. Melas was left alone in a room with the unsteady Kemp. What effort did he make to save Paul? None. He grovelled and bowed. He told Mycroft that he feared the old man's EYES. This was his reaction while Paul Kratides was being starved to death. He also congratulated himself

on his conduct. He told Mycroft it was “fortunate” that he himself took no steps. Was he paid by the kidnappers? Yes. Kemp gave him five sovereigns, and Melas did not refuse the fee.

“It’s every man’s business to see justice done.” Sherlock Holmes said in “The Adventure of the Crooked Man.”

“Watson, you are a British jury, and I never met a man who was more eminently fitted to represent one.” Sherlock Holmes said in “The Adventure of the Abbey Grange.”

What should be the verdict of the gentlemen and gentlewomen of the jury in the trial of Mycroft Holmes?

So Very Suspicious

By Karen Gold

This song (sung to the tune of *Suspicion* by Stevie Wonder) was first presented at The Bootmakers of Toronto Meeting on February 28, 2015

Verse 1:

So very suspicious... the writing on the wall
So very suspicious... bloody letters tall
Sweet revenge is calling... “RACHE” is the word
Some linguistic decoy... but Holmes is undeterred.

Chorus:

And those who do bad things, they don’t understand -- people suffer
Sherlock Holmes is on the way... hey, hey.

Verse 2:

On a farm in Utah... lived Lucy Ferrier
Jefferson, a miner... he fell in love with her
But Brigham Young said, “Oh, no,” ... to that young girl’s plan
Said, “You can only marry... a chosen Mormon man.”

Chorus:

But those who do bad things, they don’t understand – people suffer
Sherlock Holmes is on the way... hey, hey.

Repeat Chorus:

Yes, those who do bad things, they don’t understand – people suffer
Sherlock Holmes is on the way... hey, hey.

Verse 3:

'Neath a poisoned body... lies a wedding ring
From a loveless marriage... resulting from a sting
Stangerson and Drebber... they stole Lucy away
But Jefferson has found them... he finally made them pay.

Chorus:

'Cause those who do bad things, they don't understand – people suffer
Sherlock Holmes is on the way... hey, hey.

Verse 4:

So very suspicious... a puzzle unresolved
By Lestrade and Gregson... their skills so unevolved
But Holmes is working backwards... with all the facts involved
He never gets due credit... when the case is solved.

Chorus:

And those who do bad things, they don't understand -- people suffer
Sherlock Holmes is on the way...
Sherlock Holmes is on the way....(fade out)

Harpooning

Continued from page 18

could not find the man is hardly very convincing, for Carey made no attempt to conceal himself or his identity and Cairns would surely have followed his actions carefully.

What might have changed the situation? Neligan's son discovered that some of his father's securities had been sold by Carey. He set about locating Black Peter and doubtless advertised for information concerning his whereabouts. Cairns would have answered the advertisement and revealed how Neligan's father had been murdered. Cairn's testimony plus the evidence of the securities might not have placed a noose about Carey's neck but would have been enough to ensure an interview with him. Neligan could have promised Cairns some or all of the securities that Carey had not yet sold if Cairns helped with the murder.

It is curious that the case should have occurred in July 1895, so soon after the death of the Norwegian inventor of the modern grenade harpoon gun. It is also interesting that Holmes announced at the close of the case that he was departing for Norway. He gave no explanation for this. One wonders whether he suspected there was more to the case than met the eye.

Harpooning Black Peter

By Nick Dunn-Meynell

Nick Dunn-Meynell is a Sherlockian living in England. This is his third article in *Canadian Holmes*.



It is tempting to imagine that Holmes borrowed the harpoon he employed for his pig-sticking experiments in “The Adventure of Black Peter” from Watson’s literary agent, Arthur Conan Doyle, who had been a surgeon on a whaler in his youth and had kept samples as mementos [Stashower, Daniel, *Teller of Tales*, Henry Holt, 1999, p128]. That would be to assume cordial relations between Holmes and Doyle. That such relations almost certainly did not exist is suggested by Holmes’s failure to consult him regarding the plausibility of a harpooner hurling such a weapon with sufficient force to pin a man to a wall, and to achieve such a feat with a harpoon plucked from a wall before his victim could even unsheathe the knife with which he may have intended to kill his assailant. Holmes was evidently convinced that Doyle was a fraud whose every word was untrustworthy, hence he did not even trouble to read Doyle’s purported recollections of experiences on board the *Hope*. Had Holmes turned to Doyle’s “The Glamour of the Arctic” in *The Idler* of July 1892 he might have read the following:

The gallant seaman, who in all the books stands in the prow of a boat, waving a harpoon over his head, with the line snaking out into the air behind him...[has not been known] for more than a hundred years, since first the obvious proposition was advanced that one could shoot both harder and more accurately than one could throw. Yet one clings to the ideals of one’s infancy, and I hope that another century may have elapsed before the brave fellow disappears from the frontispieces, in which he still throws his outrageous weapon an impossible distance. The swivel gun, like a huge horse-pistol, with its great oakum wad, and 28 drams of powder, is a more reliable, but a far less picturesque, object.

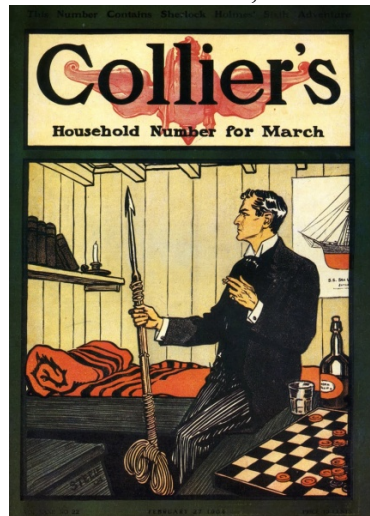
With his practical knowledge of whaling, Doyle inevitably regarded this story as something of a joke. The romance of whaling was there, to

be sure, but it was a fairy tale romance. Doyle might have hoped that frontispieces of the 18th-century harpooner combining the physique of a Goliath with the unerring eye of a David would persist, but he drew the line at a *Strand* illustration of ‘Black Peter with his beard to the ceiling, and a great harpoon driven through him. That’s ginger.’ [Lancelyn Green, Richard (ed.), *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*, Oxford University Press, 1993, p366]. But just as behind the romance of whaling was the profit motive, so Doyle was happy to negotiate the sale of such hokum provided that, as usual, he pocketed the royalties.

Whaling had been transformed by Svend Foyn. In 1870 he had patented the grenade harpoon gun and so transformed the whaling industry. The skill of the harpooner was still vital, but only to take accurate aim. Thus James Lancaster, ‘a little Ribston pippin of a man, with ruddy cheeks and fluffy side-whiskers,’ and Hugh Pattins, ‘a long, dried-up creature, with lank hair and sallow cheeks,’ could make their livings as harpooners. It was skill and not brute strength that counted now.

In fact, even if Holmes had thought to borrow a harpoon from Doyle, it would have been quite useless for his purposes, since harpooners only treasured and exhibited the mangled weapons they had actually used, the more twisted out of shape the better. ‘As soldiers wore medals, so sailors kept such ‘wildly elbowed’ weapons as mementoes of their heroic encounters.’ [Hoare, Philip, *Leviathan, or The Whale*, Fourth Estate, 2009, p147]. Such a distorted tool would have been quite useless unless Doyle had first straightened it out. But what if he had? It would then have been useless for purposes of comparison. Black Peter’s harpoons would certainly have been bent. Had Holmes engaged in the honourable sport of pig-sticking with an equally mangled weapon, he would soon have realized that it was quite useless.

Besides, Holmes’s belief that a harpooner had hurled the weapon suffered from an additional drawback, and that was that it was intrinsically



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impossible. Holmes had to his credit ascertained that he himself lacked the strength to drive a harpoon through a pig at a single blow and send it flying across a room to pin the carcass to a wall. He had not, though, thought to ask a professional harpooner whether they could manage the trick either. Conan Doyle would have assured Holmes that such miraculous feats are to be confined to fiction. There had to be a more plausible, if a far less picturesque, solution.

In the real world there was only one means by which Peter Carey could have been impaled in that extraordinary manner. Patrick Cairns must have come armed with a modern harpoon gun mounted upon some vehicle, perhaps one he was transporting for installation on a whaler. He could have invited Black Peter to the window of the hut to view it, and an accomplice might then have fired the harpoon. The impact would have hurled Carey back and left him a foot above the ground and attached to the wall. Afterwards the furniture would have been rearranged to make it seem as if Carey had leapt up from one side of the table while Cairns had been seated with the harpoon behind him and within easy arm's reach. Cairns ought to have unsheathed Carey's knife, though, for it should have occurred to Holmes that Cairns could hardly have removed the harpoon from the wall, taken aim and hurled it all while Carey was still struggling in vain to remove the knife from a sheath in which it had gotten stuck. Besides, harpooning a man who had not even unsheathed his weapon hardly looked like self defence.

Who might Cairns's accomplice have been? It could have been an old crew mate. Alternatively, it could have been Black Peter's wife, who clearly hated her husband. Yet she declared to the police how glad she was that he was dead, which would be surprising if she were the murderer. Or it could have been the son of the man Black Peter had murdered. It is an extraordinary coincidence that John Hopley Neligan and Patrick Cairns should coincidentally visit Black Peter on the same night, having both taken so many years to track him down. It is rather more likely that they came together.

Cairns claimed that his intention had been to blackmail Carey by revealing how he had murdered Neligan, but after all those years his word, without a shred of evidence to support it, would have been quite worthless. Carey's simple lifestyle hardly suggested a man living in luxury off ill-gotten gains. Cairns must have realized he could do nothing until he had evidence, which would explain why he had not attempted to blackmail Carey earlier. His claim that he let the years slip by because he

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The Ploys of Sherlock Holmes — *An Analysis of Holmes’s* *Theatrical Efforts to Obtain Clues*

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It was not merely that Holmes changed his costume. His expression, his manner, his very soul seemed to vary with every fresh part that he assumed. The stage lost a fine actor, even as science lost an acute reasoner, when he became a specialist in crime.”

So spoke Dr. Watson in “A Scandal in Bohemia,” a case in which the master detective’s faithful chronicler presented his readers with ample evidence of Holmes’s theatrical abilities.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the ploys used by Sherlock Holmes in five different cases in the Canon. By “ploy” I mean the method used by Holmes to find a clue during an investigation whereby Holmes feigned clumsiness or illness in order to gather evidence. Thus I eliminated cases that involved only Holmes’s skills at acting or disguise but not a combination of his deft physical movements and theatrics. According to these criteria, there are six incidents in the Sacred Writings that I shall examine: the faking of an illness in “The Reigate Squires” and the knocking over of a table later in the same case, the dropping of a cigarette box in “The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez,” the breaking of pencils in “The Adventure of the Three Students,” the upsetting of a

water-pot outside the Tregennis cottage in “The Adventure of the Devil’s Foot,” and the misplacement of Holmes’s hat in the self-narrated “The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier.”

The first case, then, dated by Watson himself as occurring in April 1897, is “The Reigate Squires.” When Watson and Holmes meet Alec Cunningham and his father, the son taunts Holmes, commenting that “you Londoners ... don’t seem to be so very quick after all.” As if on cue, as the inspector is about to reply to young Cunningham’s statement:

[Holmes’s] face had suddenly assumed the most dreadful expression. His eyes rolled upwards, his features writhed in agony, and with a suppressed groan he dropped on his face upon the ground. Horrified at the suddenness and severity of the attack, we carried him into the kitchen, where he lay back in a large chair and breathed heavily for some minutes. Finally, with a shamefaced apology for his weakness, he rose once more.

This particular act is performed by Holmes not in order to procure a clue through observation. No, this ploy is rather more involved and exemplifies the remarkable mental machinations of the Master, if I may be so alliterative.

As Holmes later explains, he fell down in order to prevent Inspector Forrester from telling the guilty Cunninghams of the one clue they had found — a torn note, later discovered to have been written by the Cunninghams. Thus he successfully distracts the men so that they do not realize how far along the detectives are in their investigation, and become concerned. Second, Holmes faked a fit in order to gain sympathy. He mentions his susceptibility to “nervous attacks” as soon as he is helped up by the men. By gaining the sympathy of those around him, particularly old Cunningham, he puts the guilty pair at ease and elicits more answers from them in the questioning period that follows. But most importantly, he talks old Cunningham into writing out a reward notice, thereby procuring a copy of his handwriting to which he can compare the torn note. Yet notice the way in which Holmes does this, by another act which he admits “had, perhaps, some little merit of ingenuity,” namely, writing the message himself and showing it to the squire, but purposely making a mistake that the squire corrects, thus providing the writing sample. Holmes’s mistake is passed off by Watson as a result of his illness and Holmes pretends to look embarrassed. Alec Cunningham, in his arrogance, laughs at Holmes.

After discovering the truth about Holmes's imposture, Watson is not put off at being duped; rather, he praises Holmes: "Speaking professionally, it was admirably done."

Yet was this play on his audience's "sympathetic pain," an act meant to cause commiseration, for which Holmes apologizes to Watson and the Inspector, truly necessary? An examination of the context of the scene would seem to indicate that it was. Holmes immediately realized that both Cunninghams were cool towards him and Alec was overtly cocky, so he played into their hands by letting them think that he was an erring, feeble, foolish detective. Then he simply let them provide the clue for him. It would seem that Holmes's first ploy not only turned the tables admirably, lending a bemusing element of comeuppance usually found in comedy, but also procured a clue very effectively and efficiently.

However, Holmes's next ploy, which he daringly performs only minutes later, proves to be much riskier. To Watson, it seems obvious that Holmes has planned what happens:

Holmes fell back until he and I were the last of the group. Near the foot of the bed was a small square table, on which stood a dish of oranges and a carafe of water. As we passed it, Holmes, to my utter astonishment, leaned over in front of me and deliberately knocked the whole thing over. The glass smashed into a thousand pieces, and the fruit rolled about into every corner of the room.

"You've done it now, Watson," said he, coolly. "A pretty mess you've made of the carpet."

I stooped in some confusion and began to pick up the fruit, understanding that for some reason my companion desired me to take the blame upon myself.

Doyle's description of this event can be viewed in a rather comical light, with Holmes making Watson look like the Nigel Bruce type rather than the



Burke and Hardwicke versions. Holmes later explains that he did this in order to create a diversion and rush back to Alec Cunningham's dressing room and search his dressing gown for the rest of the note to the murdered coachman that would prove the father's and son's guilt. Yet upon closer examination, this ploy seems rather unnecessary. Why did Holmes not have the Inspector demand to search the gown or pick the note out of the pocket himself after making up a reason to go into the room? Why rush back and risk the Cunninghams following him and then strangling him, which is almost what happens? Of course, Holmes knows Watson and the police are there to help him, but why such a dramatic and pointless ruse? Simply confronting the Cunninghams with the note found in the gown would have been enough to prove their guilt and force their confessions. It was not necessary for Holmes to provoke them into assaulting him to show that they had committed murder. Perhaps Holmes was carried away by his previous theatrical performance and wanted to improve upon it. Or perhaps there is another solution, for "when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth."

However, let us look at the next canonical ploy. This occurs seven years later in November 1894 in "The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez," some months after Holmes has returned from the dead. This ploy, like the previous one, involves Holmes pretending to be a clumsy blunderer, but this time he cannot and does not blame the mishap on Watson, as he carries out his act in full view of the man he is tricking: Professor Coram. When Inspector Stanley Hopkins, Watson, and Holmes enter the room to talk to the Professor, after Holmes has examined all the clues outside and inside the house, he is offered a cigarette from a large tin. Watson relates:

Holmes stretched out his hand at the same moment, and between them they tipped the box over the edge. For a minute or two we were all on our knees retrieving stray cigarettes from impossible places. When we rose again I observed that Holmes's eyes were shining and his cheeks tinged with colour. Only at a crisis have I seen those battle-signals flying.

"Yes," said he, "I have solved it."

It would seem that this ploy of Holmes is the clinching act that provides the final clue to the mystery of who killed Professor Coram's

secretary, Willoughby Smith. Holmes had smoked a number of cigarettes earlier, at the Professor's invitation, and dropped the ash on the floor. By knocking over the tin and bending down to pick up the spilled cigarettes, he had the opportunity to "see quite clearly, from the traces upon the cigarette ash, that the prisoner had, in our absence, come out from her retreat."

Was the ploy in this case necessary? Well, it was planned by Holmes early, as he must have reasoned that he would somehow have to examine the ash he dropped after smoking the cigarettes in the room earlier in the investigation. Thus, he deemed the ploy necessary almost from the start of the case. Yet this is not proof enough of the need for the ruse, for, as we know, Holmes did err in some matters. He successfully tricked everybody into thinking he was clumsy but it seems this ploy was simply that – an act through and through. Holmes could have simply bent down and examined the ash for marks or signs of disturbance. Holmes wanted to give Professor Coram his comeuppance and lend a theatrical flourish to the proceedings. (1) Why this compulsion?

Another example of this remarkable way of extricating clues can be found in "The Adventure of the Three Students," which occurs in April 1895, less than five months after Holmes's and Watson's adventure in Kent at Yoxley Old Place. This case takes place in "one of our great University towns," now assumed, I say with no authority and after great debate in the Sherlockian world, to be Cambridge. Holmes finds himself in the middle of a fairly straightforward and literal whodunit, as he must discover which of three students has attempted to cheat on a test by looking at the exam papers in advance. Upon investigating the scene of the academic transgression, Holmes finds the chip of a pencil, indicating that an unusual pencil was used to copy the questions and was sharpened with a large and very dull knife.

Holmes's ploy that follows is quite logical. In the residence of the first student, Gilchrist, Holmes pretends to be interested in some examples of medieval architecture in the student's room and, copying them in his notebook, breaks his pencil. He then borrows one from his host, as well as a knife to sharpen his own pencil. Watson records: "The same curious accident happened to him in the rooms of the Indian — a silent little hook-nosed fellow, who eyed us askance and was obviously glad when Holmes's architectural studies had come to an end. I could not see that in either case Holmes had come upon the clue for which he was searching." Apart from the not very flattering portrait of an Indian (which ironically foreshadows Doyle's 1906 campaign to free unjustly imprisoned half-

Indian George Edalji), what does this passage tell us? Holmes's ploy was obvious, and Watson saw through it immediately. But the sleuth did not insist on talking to the third student, Miles McLaren, or examining his pencil or knife. This suggests that Holmes does not think the pencil or knife belong to any of the students; indeed, he notes, "Pencils, too, and knives — all was satisfactory." So to whom do they belong? This is the most curious aspect of this subterfuge and, in my opinion, of the whole case, for nowhere was I able to find the solution to what Holmes at one point named "the best and only final clue." I find it incomprehensible that Holmes would give up on this unusual pencil made by the Johann Faber Company when it seemed so crucial to the case. Were the pencil and knife Bannister's? It is highly unlikely, after all, that Gilchrist would have had a knife and pencil on his person after returning from track practice. If the items were Bannister's, why could Holmes not simply ask to see them or look at them by means of a ploy similar to the one employed in the first two students' rooms? Then he could have confronted the butler with this damning piece of evidence until he confessed that he had been protecting Gilchrist. The case would have ended a day earlier and saved Holmes the trouble of travelling to the track and gathering soil from the long-jump pit. If the "best and only final clue, has run to nothing," it was entirely the fault of Holmes. The ploy for discovering the owner of the curious pencil and the blunt knife was necessary and well done, but the possibilities it raised were woefully neglected by Holmes. To paraphrase the sleuth himself: I would draw to your attention the curious incident of the pencil and knife. But Holmes did nothing with the pencil and knife. That is the curious incident.

Now I move on from a rather distressing example of Holmes's failure to follow up on a rather simple and potentially effective ploy, to an ingenious deceit, albeit reminiscent of the example of Holmes's purposeful slapstick involving a table in "The Reigate Squires." It occurs in "The Adventure of the Devil's Foot," which William Baring-Gould dates as taking place from Tuesday, March 16, to Saturday, March 20, 1897. Holmes is on vacation with Watson in Cornwall when he is summoned to a house to investigate the sudden madness of two brothers and the death of a sister while playing a card game in their house. He arrives at Tredannick Wartha with the surviving brother, Mortimer Tregennis, and Watson: "Holmes walked slowly and thoughtfully among the flower-pots and along the path before we entered the porch. So absorbed was he in his thoughts, I remember, that he stumbled over the

watering-pot, upset its contents, and deluged both our feet and the garden path.”

Holmes later explains this ploy:

Our next obvious step is to check, so far as we can, the movements of Mortimer Tregennis after he left the room. In this there is no difficulty, and they seem to be above suspicion. Knowing my methods as you do, you were, of course, conscious of the somewhat clumsy water-pot expedient by which I obtained a clearer impress of his foot than might otherwise have been possible. The wet sandy path took it admirably. Last night was also wet, you will remember, and it was not difficult having obtained a sample print to pick out his track among others and to follow his movements. He appears to have walked away swiftly in the direction of the vicarage.

There are a few interesting aspects to this ploy. The first is that, judging by Watson’s narration of the original incident, he was as duped by Holmes’s fakery as Tregennis no doubt was so Holmes’s “you know my methods” line is humorous in hindsight. I must point out, however, that Watson was well aware of Holmes’s second example of acting in “The Reigate Squires” and, from his descriptions, seems to have seen through his friend’s trickery in “The Golden Pince-Nez” and “The Three Students” as well. Hence the doctor is probably only dramatizing the events here for the sake of his readers.

Another interesting aspect of this ploy is that it gives us insight into Holmes’s methods. Evidently, he had not yet ruled out Mortimer Tregennis as a suspect and, unlike the police and more like the gentlemanly consulting detective he usually was, he does not want Tregennis to know that he suspects him, so he tips over the water pot surreptitiously to procure a sample footprint. That Holmes could so quickly reason out, and then act upon, a way to ascertain whether or not Tregennis was telling the truth and could be considered a suspect is a testament to the detective’s capacity for moments of sheer brilliance and improvised genius, both of which are qualities of great actors.

But was the ploy the work of a great actor, as Watson has maintained Holmes was elsewhere in the Canon? The trick was, I think, necessary, unlike the “Golden Pince-Nez” ruse, for example, and was performed brilliantly. For further proof, albeit somewhat un-Canonical, let us turn to the Granada Television adaptation of this story. In the Granada version

of “The Devil’s Foot,” instead of tipping over the water pot, Holmes pretends to walk backwards into Tregennis, stepping on Tregennis’s feet so as to make an impression in the soft gravel. Then he apologizes and bends down to examine the print. This is a poor change from the original text, I think. Brett’s movements are too obvious, and if you are going to step on someone’s foot, why would you bend down to look at the footprint? Even an idiot would be able to see through this bit of bad acting. The original ploy is much more subtle and the revision of it in the Granada version only emphasizes the strengths of the original act, for it made me wonder how Holmes managed to look at the footprint so as not to bring attention to what he was doing after he had tipped over the water pot. But, of course, Holmes would have bent down to pick the pot up and put it back, and in that instant have observed the sample footprint of Mortimer Tregennis.

Holmes created unnecessary ploys in “The Reigate Squires” (the second ploy) and “The Golden Pince-Nez.” The subterfuge in “The Three Students” was effective and necessary but Holmes’s use of it afterwards was uncharacteristically poor. So, the score thus far is three to two in favour of good ploys over bad ones. Yet why those two impractical acts? I believe there is a reason that links all of these ruses together. But before I come to that reason, there is the sixth and final ploy to examine.

What makes this final ploy so unusual is how it is told. “The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier,” like “The Adventure of the Lion’s Mane,” which occurs during Holmes’s retirement six years later, is narrated by Holmes, not Watson. Holmes’s own description of one of his ploys is necessary, it would seem, for: “The good Watson had at that time deserted me for a wife, the only selfish action which I can recall in our association. I was alone.”

This 1903 case takes place in early January, only 10 months or so before the Great Detective’s retirement at the rather young age of 49, an anniversary reached, it is generally assumed, a day before this case began on January 7. But the epiphany we are looking for in this case does not concern Holmes’s Twelfth Night birthday, but the final ploy of this slapstick sextet. It occurs when Holmes arrives at Tuxbury Old Park, enters the room and notices the smell emanating from Ralph the butler’s brown leather gloves, which have been laid on the hall table.

I turned, placed my hat there, knocked it off, stooped to pick it up, and contrived to bring my nose within a foot of the gloves.

Yes, it was from them that the curious tarry odour was oozing. I passed on into the study with my case complete. Alas, that I should have to show my hand so when I tell my own story! It was by concealing such links in the chain that Watson was enabled to produce his meretricious finales.

Holmes is generous in his praise of Watson here, both as a writer of dramatic fiction and as a friend who, it is suggested, saw through Holmes's acting every time. The ploy seems mundane enough, and hardly as dramatic a deductive denouement as the spilling of the cigarettes in "The Golden Pince-Nez." Yet Holmes later explains that he had reasoned that Godfrey Emsworth had leprosy or a similar disease and that the case for this theory was "so strong that I determined to act as if it were actually proved. When on arriving here I noticed that Ralph, who carries out the meals, had gloves which are impregnated with disinfectants, my last doubts were removed."

Again, this ploy provides insight into Holmes's methods. His quick thinking and good acting allowed him to prove a theory that he had formed, and to prove it in a necessary, simple and effective way, even though it was recounted by the detective in a non-dramatic way.

Now to my own theory, my master scheme linking the master's schemes. Why all these ploys? Why such drama, faked slapstick and theatrics? Certainly there have been many theories, including a paper by Marvin Kaye titled "The Histrionic Holmes," which details Holmes's penchant as an actor, including his dramatic flourishes at the end of "The Naval Treaty" and the like. Indeed, William Baring-Gould, in his opus *Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street*, says that Holmes joined a Shakespearean stage company in 1879 and toured the United States with them, returning to London and his career as a consulting detective in the summer of 1880. But can the elaborate tricks I have outlined, some unnecessary, simply be passed off as flashes of Holmes's talent as an actor? Can these antics just be Holmes's way of reliving, if only for a moment, his days on the stage?

I think not. This is too prevalent a theory and while it may accommodate some aspects of Holmes, such as the many disguises he donned in certain cases, and his theatrical finales to investigations, such as "The Six Napoleons" and "The Mazarin Stone," this hypothesis cannot account for Holmes's six ploys. All six, in five cases, occur outside London, which is unusual, at least statistically, considering about half of the 60 tales occur in the city – and in the presence, usually, of

Watson and only one or two other people. There is no real audience and no dramatic effect or theatrical finale. If Holmes wished only to show up someone, as he does with his planned denouements (e.g., “The Mazarin Stone,” “The Six Napoleons”), which usually are brought about in 221B, where Holmes is most comfortable and extroverted, he could have done so openly to the arrogant Cunninghams and Professor Coram. No, the ploy is a surreptitious, self-satisfying act, an act no one else, save Watson perhaps, must catch on to. When Holmes reveals the ploy, he often does so only to Watson, and never makes a drama out of the explanation. This is hardly just Holmes the actor. Something else is at work. When Holmes carries out a ploy, it is only he who is in on it, and he is acting on an inner compulsion, not simply a drive to act.

Why, then? What would cause Holmes to resort to such an introverted and surreptitious, yet theatrical and deftly executed, method of procuring clues? Can we re-evaluate this “histrionic” theory of Holmes and work out another hypothesis that can explain Holmes’s disguises, acting and ruses? The answer, I propose, is to be found in the chronology of the cases, a chronology I have been remarking upon throughout my paper. As Holmes noted in “A Scandal in Bohemia:” “It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data,” and so the data I now wish to present shall form the basis of my theory.

Holmes’s addiction to cocaine has been said by some Sherlockians, if one looks in the infinitely useful *World Bibliography of Sherlock Holmes*, to be either untrue or not very serious. With regard to the chronology of Holmes’s nasty need, it was T.S. Blakeney’s belief that “the practice had not begun” at the time of the historic meeting with Watson, but that the habit was, by 1888, “strongly pronounced and probably lasted intermittently till as late as 1897.” (2)

The first reference to Holmes’s drug addiction is, indeed, not mentioned until “A Scandal in Bohemia,” dated May 1887 (most of my dates are based on Baring-Gould’s calculations). From May 1887 until September 1888, in which both cocaine and morphine are mentioned in *The Sign of Four*, Holmes’s then-acceptable habit is noted in six cases, the other four being “The Man with the Twisted Lip,” “The Five Orange Pips,” “The Dying Detective” and “The Yellow Face.” During that period, Holmes dons a disguise or acts six times in four cases: twice in “A Scandal in Bohemia,” once in “The Man with the Twisted Lip,” once in “The Dying Detective,” and twice in *The Sign of Four*, all cases in which Holmes is mentioned as taking drugs. Also, Holmes enacts dramatic finales or ruses in “A Scandal in Bohemia,” “The Five Orange

Pips,” “The Blue Carbuncle,” and “The Naval Treaty” in this time span. During the same period, you will remember, Holmes commits two ploys in “The Reigate Squires,” which takes place in April 1887, only a month before the mention of drugs in “A Scandal in Bohemia.” In “The Reigate Squires,” you will also recall, Holmes has gone to the countryside to recover his health, presumably from overwork, but also, it begins to appear, from drug taking. Perhaps it was the beginning of the habit but Holmes would later inject the seven per cent solution “three times a day for many months,” as Watson remarked in *The Sign of Four*.

It is also doubtful, given that Watson was away from Baker Street during his numerous marriages, that he can be relied on for knowing just how addicted Holmes was or if the solution ever became more than seven per cent. There is little doubt that Watson was very concerned about the effect of the habit on the sleuth’s health. Perhaps it was this concern that caused no mention of the addiction in cases chronicled for the next two years. Another possibility is that Holmes concealed his problem from Watson. From 1891 until 1894, of course, no records of Holmes’s drug taking exist, as he was presumed dead. However, if one accepts the connection between Holmes’s addiction and his histrionics, then his rather cruel acting before he reveals himself to Watson in “The Empty House” suggests he may not have been able to rid himself of the nasty habit. The ploys in “The Golden Pince-Nez” and “The Three Students” occur in November 1894 and April 1895, respectively, and Holmes acts in “Black Peter” in July 1895. If one includes Holmes’s ruses and dramatic finales, then one must add “The Norwood Builder,” which took place in August 1895, to the list. The year 1896 has been called by Baring-Gould and others “The Missing Year,” as only three cases are said to have taken place during that period. In one of them, “The Missing Three-Quarter,” reference is made to Holmes’s continuing addiction, and in March of the following year, Watson notes that, at the beginning of “The Devil’s Foot,” Holmes’s “iron constitution showed some symptoms of giving way in the face of constant hard work of a most exacting kind, aggravated, perhaps, by occasional indiscretions of his own.” Accordingly, as related earlier in this paper, the pair went on vacation in Cornwall, and in the same case Holmes executes the ploy involving the water pot, just as he performed two ploys during his vacation in Reigate. There is little mention of drugs for some time after this date, until a reference to morphine — to which Holmes may or may not have still been addicted — in “The Illustrious Client” in September 1902 and an indication of Holmes’s cocaine habit by Watson in “The

Creeping Man” in September 1903. During this same period, Holmes acts or dons a disguise in “The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax” in July 1902 and in “The Mazarin Stone” in the summer of 1903. Finally, it is in January 1903 that the final ploy that I discussed, in “The Blanched Soldier,” occurred.

There certainly seems to be a correlation between Holmes’s drug-taking and his histrionics. The evidence supporting such a theory is not merely statistical or chronological. Watson himself gives us proof that Holmes took cocaine often and not just when he was bored, as is indicated in the quote from “The Devil’s Foot,” which talks of Holmes working hard in his practice while also indulging in his habit. Holmes took a vacation from hard work and addiction in that case, and perhaps the trips to Cambridge or Oxford (“The Three Students”) and Reigate were taken for the same reason. Cocaine helped to clarify Holmes’s mind, he tells us in *The Sign of Four*, and claims by optimists such as Edgar W. Smith, in his paper “Up From The Needle,” that the great detective “was always able to cast off the spell, and to find inspiration instead in the exhilaration of the chase” are completely unsubstantiated by canonical proof. To say that Holmes took the drug only from 1887 until 1897 is also to stretch credibility, regardless of the Granada adaptation of “The Devil’s Foot” in which Watson buries Holmes’s syringe, seemingly for good. How else does one account for the 1903 “Creeping Man” reference to Holmes’s habit and the six accounts of Holmes’s dramatic finales, acting and ploys from 1899 until his retirement? I am not saying that Holmes was injecting himself in the middle of investigations, merely that the addiction did take a powerful hold over him during his career. I am also not saying that Holmes was a raving addict or cocaine-crazed maniac, or that Watson did not make every effort — although how much he knew about the habit is debatable, as I noted earlier — to wean Holmes of his physically debilitating vice. However, there can be little doubt that the drug brought out Holmes’s theatrical flair and caused him to act, disguise himself, and on the spur of the moment commit ploys, sometimes unnecessarily, as in “The Golden Pince-Nez” and “The Reigate Squires.”

As Watson noted in “A Scandal in Bohemia,” cocaine causes drowsiness and the drug can accentuate ennui, rather than relieve it, as Holmes wished to do with his seven per cent solution. In addition, according to reliable current texts, such as *Addiction Psychiatry: Current Diagnosis and Treatment*, euphoria and grandiosity are two effects of cocaine use.(3) More important, however, according to the book

Vulnerability to Drug Abuse, there is a definite relationship between cocaine use and “histrionic traits.”(4) Histrionic people seem to use cocaine longer, and it has been surmised that cocaine could release dopamine in the body and this is why cocaine use exaggerates histrionic behaviour.(5)

Thus, the ploys of Sherlock Holmes are much more than simple slapstick, clever ways of getting clues or seemingly inexplicable wastes of effort. These devices, like Holmes’s acting and sporadic flair for the theatrical in various cases, are all results of the sleuth’s addiction to cocaine, which draws out innate dramatic tendencies. I hope that this preliminary study of Holmes’s drug-affected behaviour will lead students of the Canon to re-examine Holmes’s actions in his cases, in the light of this link between the Master’s habit and his histrionics. Holmes was a genius in his profession, as we all know, and far from inhibiting him, it would seem that in many cases his addiction caused him to procure clues and proceed in his investigations in unusual, exciting, improvisational and often effective ways. Truly, the drug-stimulated histrionics of Holmes show what the world’s greatest consulting detective meant when he said, in “The Greek Interpreter”: “Art in the blood is liable to take the strangest forms.”

Non-Sherlockian Sources

Allen, William A. et al. *How Drugs Can Affect Your Life*. Springfield, Illinois: Charles Thomas, 1987.

Glantz, Meyer and Pickens, Roy. *Vulnerability to Drug Abuse*. Washington: American Psychological Association, 1992.

Miller, Norman S. *Addiction Psychiatry: Current Diagnosis and Treatment*. Toronto: John Wiley and Sons, 1995.

Notes

1) The “audience” of the three ploys previously discussed, specifically Alex Cunningham and Professor Coram, act in a smug and overconfident manner, certain that Holmes is incompetent, so it seems that Holmes plays along and feigns ineptitude with his tricks so that their self-assuredness will cause them to slip up. The professor even sneers after Holmes claims to have solved the case. Like the act of

knocking the table over, the cigarette-tin stratagem provides Holmes with the final clue that he needs, just as the fallen bowl gave him the diversion necessary to obtain the damning piece of evidence against the Cunninghams. The final point of comparison I would make is in regard to Holmes's explication of the act to Watson. As usual, he explains all his actions to Watson after the case is over, and is remarkably modest about the ploy, as he was in "The Reigate Squires": "It was a simple trick, but exceedingly effective."

2) Blakeney, T.S. *Sherlock Holmes: Fact or Fiction?* New York: Otto Penzler Books, 1993 (reprint of 1932 edition), p. 19.

3) Miller, p. 240.

4) Glantz, p. 122.

5) *Ibid.* p. 123.

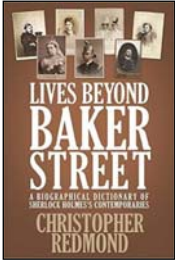
"Holmes gave me a brief review"

Continued from page 33

To add some Canadian interest to the book, Chris Redmond, Charles Prepolec and Peter Calamai were interviewed, and you will find these between the chapters.

Investigating Sherlock is a fine companion to the show and would be enjoyable to any of its fans. If you want to re-watch the series, this is the perfect book to have next to you.

“Holmes gave me a brief review”



Lives Beyond Baker Street by Christopher Redmond (MX Publishing, \$18.95).

This book can be read as a series of short biographies of notable Victorian/Edwardian people who influenced the world in a wide variety of ways. It is also a way to link Conan Doyle’s original stories to the historical events and individuals on which they might be based. The book lists several possible candidates for characters such as Irene Adler, the King of Bohemia and Professor Moriarty. With over 800 entries, Redmond’s research is to be commended. It is a fun book to pick up for 20 minutes, read a few biographies and return to at any time, dipping into lives of the famous and not-so-famous time and time again. You might read about a scientist, a theatre producer, an athlete or a politician. Redmond’s sweep of subjects is as wide and varied as could be imagined.

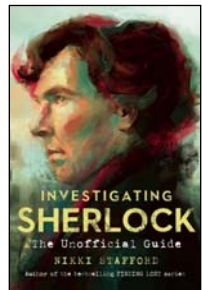
The book’s introduction is almost worth the price of admission. In it Redmond talks about the research that went into the book. He used such sources as the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the *British Medical Journal*, and the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

This book would be the perfect addition to any Sherlockian library and adds nicely to most Sherlockians’ knowledge of the people and era we all love so well.

Investigating Sherlock by Nikki Stafford (ECW Press, \$18.95).

The popularity of the BBC *Sherlock* series is undeniable. It has created a new generation of Sherlockians, and this book is not only a response to that but can be read as a supplement to those episodes. The book starts with a standard set of biographies.

Each episode is then examined in a set pattern: Guide, Highlight for anything funny or notable, Did you notice?, From ACD to BBC, Interesting Facts, Nitpicks, and finally Oops.



Continued on page 32

Letters From Lomax

Musings and comments from Peggy Perdue, Curator of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection of the Toronto Reference Library



he Toronto Public Library's Arthur Conan Doyle Collection is a good place to explore trends in Sherlockian fandom because it is not only a record of the life and work of Arthur Conan Doyle, but also an archive of things created by and for admirers of his most popular character, the Great Detective. While organizing some memorabilia the other day, it occurred to me that one difference between generations of Sherlockians is primarily botanical, in that the old guard plumps for the tobacco plant whereas the bright young things seem vulnerable to the lure of *Camellia sinensis*, the tea plant.

When it comes to Sherlockian symbolism, pipes and tobacco are—to keep the metaphor botanical—low-hanging fruit. Holmes's devotion to nicotine falls only slightly short of Professor Coram's, and he smokes his way through the Canon with cigars and cigarettes, in addition to the pipes. For fans already inclined to tobacco appreciation, there is surely some special appeal in taking on a bit of Holmes's mantel by sharing his favourite (second favourite?) vice. In the memorabilia section of the ACD Collection we have various pipes and several assorted tins of tobacco named after Sherlock Holmes. In the ephemera section he appears in ads for a number of cigarette manufacturers. Beyond the commercial content, we find in the "Writings on the Writings" section of Sherlockian commentary many items about Holmes's smoking habits. To name just a few examples, there's the limited-edition book *Upon the distinction between the ashes of the various tobaccos*, written by "Sherlock Holmes" with the help of Nino Cirone (Ian Henry, 2000); *140 Different Varieties: A review of tobacco in the Canon* by John Hall (Northern Musgraves Sherlock Holmes Society, 1994); the newsletter *The Pipe Smoker's Ephemeris* (Privately published for the Universal Coterie of Pipe Smokers, by T. Dunn, 1965-2000) and *Sherlock Holmes as a Pipe Smoker: A Complete Analysis of all Pipe Smoking References relating to Sherlock Holmes in the Canon and its Original Illustrations*, by Thomas Gwinner (MX Publishing, 2015).

The 20th century generated numerous movies and television shows that reinforced the connection between Holmes and smoking. Many fans can

immediately bring to mind the image of Peter Cushing with a pipe, or a cigarette perched in Jeremy Brett's elegant fingers. Younger fans, however, have grown up in an era when tighter regulations on portrayals of smoking have discouraged these kinds of glamorous images of smokers. Instead, Benedict Cumberbatch's Holmes uses a nicotine patch and even talks of a "three patch problem." Jonny Lee Miller of *Elementary* is also a non-smoker. Robert Downey Junior may occasionally strike a pipe-wielding pose in his recent Holmes movies, but with most of the recent adaptations, we appear to have moved into the non-smoking section.

This situation recalls the words of Adam Ant: "Don't drink, don't smoke, what do you do?" Well, there's always tea. Tea may not figure in the original stories quite as much as tobacco does, but the word does get a very respectable 32 mentions in the Canon. The beverage is as much a part of British culture now as it was in the Victorian age, so it's no surprise that scenes of tea drinking are common in the BBC's *Sherlock* series. It is also occasionally featured in *Elementary*, most notably in one episode when a Chinese herbal tea provided by Joan cures Sherlock's head cold, and in another, less tea-positive episode where victims are served a poisoned mushroom tea. Now, anyone can see that quaffing poisoned mushroom tea in New York is significantly less appealing than having a proper cuppa in London, and consequently it is mostly the *Sherlock* fans that seem to have driven the Sherlockian tea connection. This connection now shows up regularly in fan art and fiction, and tea-related content in the ACD Collection is growing. We have an assortment of Sherlockian tea canisters and packaging that shows a record of this trend. There's "Sherlock Holmes," by First Edition Tea Co. of Toronto, and a lovely box of "Mrs. Hudson's Afternoon Tea," a Japanese product recently donated by Mitch Higurashi. For artistry and taste it's also worth checking out the tea packaging and blending of Cara McGee's Adagio Teas.

At least one Bootmaker has been an early adapter of the tea trend, as we can see by Philip Elliot's paper "The Mystery of Tea," which is held among the ACD Collection's holdings of Bootmaker papers (2005, vol. 29, no. 8). One can also look online for many Holmes and tea tie-ins. There are few things more conspicuously 21st century than online gaming culture, so we can call Holmes's presence in an online game called "Sherlock Holmes: Tea Shop Murder Mystery" significant. An online search will provide various websites where this can be played if you'd like to try it out.

You may think that my claim about this tobacco to tea shift is overstated. Perhaps it is. Let's put it to an objective test. The "Good Old Index" is a card file index of Sherlockian writings created by Tupper Bigelow and continued by Donald Redmond is held by the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection. The file was maintained up to 2000, so we'll use it to test the interests of 20th-century Sherlockians. I found over 170 items related to tobacco in the file before I got bleary-eyed counting citations on little cards, but there were only eight related to tea.


Now for a 21st-century test. We'll do a keyword search of the fan fiction site "Archive of our own" for this. As of this writing there are 1,295 hits for the pairing of keywords "Sherlock" and "Tea." By contrast there are a measly 20 hits for the keyword pair "Sherlock" and "tobacco," and 53 for "Sherlock" and "pipe." Of course, not every 21st-century fan writes fan fiction and uploads it to this site, but not every 20th-century fan is represented in the "Good Old Index" either. This comparison is not a fail-proof test of fan interests, but it is surely indicative of a trend.

So, that's where we are friends. Someone seems to have taken Holmes's pipe. Was it the Surgeon General? Was it Moriarty-tea? (I did not make this pun up. If you like it you can buy a tea version of it at adagio.com). For the smokers among you, do not be alarmed. Don't fly to tea "as an agitated woman will." Life is short, but Sherlockian studies are long. There's room for many interpretations of Sherlock Holmes. As always, you are welcome to visit Toronto Public Library's Arthur Conan Doyle Collection to investigate them all.



A few samples of tea and tobacco from the Collection, guarded over by a Sherlock Holmes action figure.

BOOTMAKERS' DIARY



... it is a page from some private diary.

— *The Five Orange Pips*

Saturday, June 11, 2016

Twenty Bootmakers and friends gather at the Duke of Kent for the annual Pub Nite and an evening of pleasant companionship.

Toast to Holmes by Meyers James Reese (a tradition); to Watson by Karen Campbell; Queen Victoria, Philip Elliott; and Queen Elizabeth II, Peggy Perdue are given.

David Sanders (the convener) presents a short paper, a repeat from Pub Nite 2011, revealing that the Duke of Kent after whom the pub was named was Prince Edward, fourth son of George III, and concludes by asking those assembled to raise their glasses in a toast to the Duke as the father of “A Certain Gracious Lady.”

David thanks the participants for their toasts and the attendees for coming, and announces the formal part of the evening concludes but they are welcome to linger for as long or as little as they wish.

— David Sanders

Friday-Sunday, June 17-19, 2016 – Conference: The Misadventures of Sherlock Holmes Minneapolis, Minnesota

The Norwegian Explorers of Minnesota, The Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections and the University of Minnesota Libraries’ Sherlock Holmes Collections hold their eighth triennial conference of international Sherlockian scholarship in Minneapolis, MN. The title and theme of the symposium is derived from the 1944 anthology of Sherlockian pastiches and parodies of the same name, edited by Ellery Queen. The volume’s cover was illustrated by Frederic Dorr Steele and authors included the editor, Vincent Starrett; Agatha Christie; Mark Twain; James M. Barrie; O’Henry and (Canadian) Stephen Leacock.

The symposium, attended by over 120 Sherlockians, opens with a special reception for organizers and speakers on the Thursday, and

features 13 speakers and their multi-media presentations on Friday afternoon, Saturday morning and afternoon, and Sunday morning. Tennessean Bill Mason, MBt, is the opening speaker. Other speakers include Vince Wright (on Sherlockian chronology), Michael Hanscher (on the Paget illustrations), Monica Schmidt (on whether or not SH fits the modern clinical definition of an addict), Betsy Rosenblatt (on intellectual property and the recent ACD Estate litigation), Zach Dundas (author of *The Great Detective*), and 15-year-old Soren Eversoll (on Sherlock Holmes in mainstream film). The formal dinner on the Saturday night is highlighted by guest speaker Michael Kean (on Holmes in verse).

The Bootmakers of Toronto were also well represented on the podium: Calgarian Charles Prepolec speaks on the cinematic misadventures of Sherlock Holmes, including parodies, spoofs, bad or low-quality films and pornographic movies and cartoons. Torontonians Donny Zaldin performs a courtroom costume skit (in which he played all the roles), wherein Sherlock Holmes (criminalist or criminal?) was prosecuted at the Old Bailey, London, for breaking the law while solving crimes and mysteries.

Attendees also take in the “Exhibition of Items from the University of Minnesota’s Sherlock Holmes Collections,” curated by Tim Johnson.

The long weekend of Sherlockian learning, entertainment and camaraderie closes with a 1944 radio play written by Edith Meiser, titled *The Case of the Missing Bullion*, performed by The Red-Throated League of Minnesota.

– Donny Zaldin

Saturday, July 16, 2016

Forty-seven Sherlockians gather in the Favourites Dining Room of Woodbine Racetrack on Saturday, July 16, 2016. This was both the 29th consecutive Silver Blaze Event and the Second Triennial Can-Am Silver Blaze Race, organized by Colonel Ross, Donny Zaldin. Six members of the Baker Street Irregulars and the Hudson Valley Scion-tists travelled from the New York City area and Indianapolis, Indiana, to attend. The six were Mike Whelan (*Wiggins* of the BSI), Mary Ann Bradley, Charles and Joan Blanksteen, Laurie Fraser Manifold (the Artist-in-Residence of the Bootmakers) and Michael Pollak.

Also visiting for the first time is Wendy Heyman-Marsaw, a member of the Spence Munros of Halifax. She writes the *Mrs. Hudson’s Kitchen* column in *Canadian Holmes*. Accompanying her are two of her sons,

one of whom also brought his fiancée. Wendy was made a Master Bootmaker this past January.

The food in the buffet line is up to its usual high standards as we dine while waiting for the first race to begin – and continue eating to the fifth race.

The Silver Blaze Race is the third race this year. The electronic sign across from the finish line announced: *Welcome – The Sherlock Holmes Society of Canada “Silver Blaze Event.”* The winner was number 7, *Dylan*, second was *Past the Stars* and third was *Silent Vision*. Donny Zaldin led a small group of guests down to the Winner’s Circle to present a trophy to the owner of the winning horse.

Back in the dining room, Donny, in his role of Colonel Ross, hands out some trophies. There are two special trophies for the Second Triennial Silver Blaze Race. One is presented to Mike Whelan for the Baker Street Irregulars and the other is for the Bootmakers. Donny thanks Barbara Rusch for all of her help and presents her with a trophy. The winner of the Notional Betting Contest to pick the winner of the Silver Blaze Race was James Reese. The winner of the best Sherlockian connection is Karen Campbell, for the horse *Clearly Ice* – the stolen jewels in *The Abbey Grange* were found under the ice in the pond. The first runner-up is Phil Elliott for *Bluegrass Kentucky* for the *Wessex Cup*. The second runner-up is Margot French for the jockey Simon Husbands, for all of the bad husbands in the Canon who gave Holmes so many cases. Marilyn Nathan wins a trophy for the best racing ensemble of alternating silver, white and black.

After the presentations, most of the attendees begin to depart, while a few stay to watch more races or visit the casino.

Later in the day, 32 members and guests assemble in room 220 of the Northern District Library for a Silver Blaze mini-conference.

The meeting is delayed for a few minutes due to a subway problem. Donny Zaldin calls the meeting to order at 7:13 P.M. and thanks everyone for attending. He welcomes Mike Whelan and Mary Ann Bradley, Michael Pollak, Laurie Fraser Manifold, and Joan and Charles Blanksteen, representing U.S. Sherlockians.

Donny then turns the meeting over to James Reese as Meyers 2016. James asks Phil Elliott to give the introduction to the story. Barbara Rusch gives “A Tribute to Silver Blaze.” Cliff Goldfarb presents “Some Musings on Dogs that Do and Don’t Bark.” His paper contrasts elements in the stories *Silver Blaze* and *Shoscombe Old Place*. Then Hartley Nathan gives a talk titled, “Some Wisps of Hay,” which also discusses

Silver Blaze and Shoscombe Old Place. He recounts criminal activities in the stories and unique features of the later story, which was set in 1902.

We then break for refreshments. The repast is provided by Mrs. Hudson, Barbara Rusch, with some help from Colonel Ross. There are two kinds of curried chicken prepared by Master Chef Donny Zaldin; the Watson variety is mild while the Holmes is very spicy. There is also a selection of sandwiches, fruit and cookies.

After the break, Karen Campbell takes up the quiz on *Silver Blaze*. The winner is Don Roebuck with a perfect score. Marilyn Penner places second and Bruce Aikin comes in third.

Charles Blanksteen presents *Silver Blaze: The Unknown Story*. He has found some notes by Dr. Watson that give details he did not share in his writing of the story.

Karen Gold distributes lyric sheets for her Sherlockian song parody, *A Horse With A Name* (based on America's *A Horse With No Name*.) She then leads us in song.

Laurie Fraser Manifold (the artist-in-residence of the Bootmakers, with the title of *Vernet*) then makes a special presentation to Barbara, Donny and Mike Whelan. She created two original oil paintings for *Silver Blaze* and presents one to the Bootmakers and the other to The Baker Street Irregulars.

James Reese thanks everyone for attending and the meeting is adjourned at 9:34 P.M. – Bruce Aikin



Some of the crowd at this year's Silver Blaze event.



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